

February 17, 2011

Distinguished members of the Committee,

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to express my support for SB 928, An Act Concerning Teacher Preparation, in particular with regard to Section 1, requiring the Department of Higher Education to study issues surrounding teachers' preparedness to provide quality reading instruction to all students in the state of Connecticut.

I come to you having traveled the long, difficult and painful road of making sure that my daughter learned to read despite our public education system. To many of you this might sound like a simple enough task. I assure you that that could not be farther from our reality. I live in the middle of the state in a relatively suburban area. When I sent my daughter to Kindergarten I had no doubt that she would be successful because I trusted that her teachers were trained to teach her. When she began to show signs that she was not learning to read the teachers did not seem to know why. When I asked how far behind she was I could not get a definitive answer. As she progressed through the grades and she became anxious and frustrated that she was not progressing in reading like the other students the teachers blamed her behavior for not being able to learn to read. In second grade when she guessed at words because the teachers had not taught her reading based on the sounds of letters in words the teachers called her impulsive. She could not read a simple rhyming poem titled, "Clickety Clack". By Third grade the teaching team placed her in a reading program and 4 months later they assured me that she had caught up to her peers in reading. However, a trained reading consultant reviewed the assessment at my request and stated that although my daughter had made *slight* progress she would NEVER catch up to her peers at the rate of progress noted. When my daughter entered 4<sup>th</sup> Grade in order to assure that I would have the most un-biased assessment possible I found it necessary to make multiple trips to New Hampshire to obtain a Comprehensive reading evaluation at my own cost to learn that my 4<sup>th</sup> grade daughter was reading at a 1<sup>st</sup> grade level!

I am in support of this bill because my daughter has had the fortune of working with some of the most warm, caring and well meaning individuals I have ever met, yet as teachers they were ill prepared to provide quality reading instruction to my child. They were unable to recognize what normal reading benchmarks were and that my daughter was not meeting them, they were unable to recommend meaningful interventions that would improve my daughter's ability to progress in reading, they were unable to read simple reading assessments to determine whether or not an intervention program that they themselves were implementing was not working, and the special education teachers, having had no extra training in teaching quality reading instruction as part of their Special Education certification, were failed to identify that my daughter was possibly Dyslexic, nor make recommendations for meaningful Goals and Objectives for her Individualized Educational Plan. These were the same individuals who were somehow responsible for teaching her how to read!

When we go to a doctor we expect them to be trained and highly skilled enough to correct whatever is ailing us and we expect the same thing from the individuals that hold the very futures of our children in their hands-our teachers, yet all across the state, and beyond, this is not happening and, by the way, you get to pick your doctor but you don't get to pick your child's

teacher! They can continue to teach whether they are successful at it or not- but that's for other legislation!

I know that teachers are not being prepared to provide quality reading instruction to our children because I have witnessed the deterioration in my own daughter as a result of feeling the profound and catastrophic sense of shame and failure at not being able to progress in reading, but also because I have spoken to so many parents who are witnessing the same thing in their own children irregardless of where they live in the state or their socio-economic background. The facts tell the story. Our education system is successful only 60% of the time in teaching our children to read to proficiency! When my daughter gets a 60 on her test there is a VERY LOW letter next to it- it is a D! Yet our teachers have convinced us that this is the best they can do! This is wrong and the data is at hand to prove it. There is a more effective way to teach reading, but the teaching colleges are too entrenched in dated methodologies that have had their day and proven their ineffectiveness at teaching ALL children to read not just the lucky 60%! I have attended meetings where new teachers have stood up and admitted that upon graduation they feared taking a Kindergarten through Third Grade position because they knew that they had not been prepared by their Connecticut teaching institution to teach reading to their students. I have witnessed individuals representing teacher's unions speaking before this committee citing a lack of teacher preparedness and continuing education as being one of the many factors contributing to the achievement gap. The National Council on Teacher Quality supports this observation citing in a study from a few years ago that Connecticut teaching colleges are not including instruction in the fundamental components of sound-based reading instruction in their teacher preparation curriculums. This can also be seen in the abysmal pass rates of new graduating teaching students when taking the Teacher Certification test that requires them to demonstrate proficiency in teaching quality reading instruction.

Failure for children to learn to read equals failure for children to thrive and really that's the goal of education, isn't it? One only needs to look at the reading proficiency rates of incarcerated inmates to answer that question! Want to fix the budget? We must commit to teaching ALL children to read so that society is not paying to support them as adults!

I am in support of this bill and any effort to bring quality reading instruction back into our public education.

Thank you for your time, your support of this bill and your future efforts to help bring quality reading instruction to our State's children. They Need and Deserve it! It is their right!

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Bankoski

This testimony and this bill are also supported by the following individuals:

Kim and Dan Dachelet

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